

Lesson 63: Tawhid

The Meaning of Tawhid

Tawhid and the oneness of God Almighty have various senses in philosophy, kalam (scholastic theology), and ‘irfan (gnosis or mysticism). The most important of the philosophical meanings are as follows:

1. Tawhid in the necessity of existence, that is, no existent other than the sacred divine essence is essentially the Necessary Existent.
2. Tawhid in the sense of simplicity and lack of composition, which has three subsidiary meanings:
 - Absence of composition of actual parts.
 - Absence of composition of potential parts.
 - Absence of composition of whatness and existence.
3. Tawhid in the sense of the negation of any difference between attributes and essence, that is, the attributes which are related to God Almighty are not like the attributes of material things, which are accidental, and do not occur in His essence, in technical terms, as ‘additions to essence’, but rather their instances are the same as the sacred divine essence, and they are all identical to one another and to the essence.
4. Tawhid in being the Creator and Lord, that is, God the Almighty does not have partners in the creation and management of the universe.
5. Tawhid in true actuality, that is, every effect which emerges from an agent or cause, ultimately can be traced back to God, the Supreme, and no agent is independently influential: ‘There is no influence in existence, but Allah’ (La mu’aththir fi al-wujud illa Allah).

Tawhid in the Necessity of Existence

In order to prove the unity and oneness of the essence of the Necessary Existent, the metaphysicians have formulated some arguments, the most certain of which is formed with the employment of the Demonstration of the Sincere (in the version of Sadr al-Muta'allihin), which may be presented as follows:

Existence has a level than which it is not possible for there to be any more perfect one; that is, it possesses a limitless perfection, and such an entity cannot be numerous. In technical terms, it possesses 'wahdat haqqah haqiqiyah' (lit. 'a true real unity'). The conclusion is that the existence of God, the Supreme, cannot be multiple.

The first premise of this demonstration is really the conclusion of the Demonstration of the Sincere, for from the above demonstration it was concluded that the chain of levels of existence must terminate in a level which is the highest and most perfect in which there is no weakness or imperfection, that is, it possesses infinite perfection.

With a bit of attention, the second premise becomes clear, for if it is assumed that such an existent is numerous, this would imply that each of them lacks entified perfections of the other, that is, the perfections of each of them would be limited and finite, while according to the first premise, the perfections of the Necessary Existent are infinite.

It might be imagined that the infinity of the perfections of the Necessary Existent implies that no other existent occurs at all, for the occurrence of any other existent would mean the possession of a part of the perfections of existence.

The answer to this objection is that the perfections of other levels, all of which are created by the Necessary Existent, are the rays of His perfections and their existences do not interfere with the infinite perfections of the Necessary Existent.

However, if another Necessary Existent is assumed, the perfections of their existences would interfere with one another, because each of them possesses a perfection which is original and independent, and neither of them would be a radiance of or subordinate to the other.

In other words, two objective perfections will interfere with one another when it is assumed that they are of the same level, but if one is vertically above another it will not interfere with it. Therefore, the existence of creatures does not contradict the infinity of the perfections of the Creator.

It is not the case that when perfection is added to a creature, it is given up by the Creator and the Creator Himself comes to lack it. But the assumption of the existence of two Necessary Existents, or the infinity of their perfections are contradictory.

This point also can be made as follows: the assumption of two independent objective perfections is

incompatible with the assumption that each of them is infinite. However, if one of them is the very dependency and relation to the other or is considered to be the radiance and manifestation of the other, there will be no contradiction with the infinity of the other that possesses independence and absolute needlessness.

The Negation of Actual Parts

If it is assumed that the sacred essence of God is composed of actually existing parts (God forbid), then all of the assumed parts will be either necessary existents or at least some of them will be contingent existents. If all of them are necessary existents, and none of them is in need of any of the others, this assumption leads to a multiplicity of necessary existents, which was refuted in the previous section.

If it is assumed that they are in need of one another, this would be incompatible with the assumption that they are necessary existents. If it is assumed that one of them is without need of the others, the Necessary Existent will be that needless one, and the assumed composition will not have any reality as a composition of true parts, for every true composition is in need of its parts.

If it is assumed that some of its parts are contingent existents, the assumed part which is a contingent existent unavoidably will be an effect. If it is now assumed that it is the effect of another part, it becomes clear that the other one is in fact the Necessary Existent possessing independent existence, and that the assumption of a true composition among them is incorrect. If it is assumed that the part which is the contingent existent is the effect of another necessary existent, this would imply a multiplicity of necessary existents, whose invalidity was established.

Hence, the assumption of the composition of the essence of the Necessary Existent from actual parts will never be correct.

The Negation of Potential Parts, Time and Space in God

What is meant by the existence of the potential parts of an existent is that it actually has a single integrated existence, and none of its parts possesses actuality and individuality and determinate boundaries, but intellectually it is possible to analyze them and separate them from one another, and whenever such an analysis is carried out, the single existent will change into several existents each of which will possess individuality and determinate boundaries.

If the potential parts can be collected, this means that their compound existent possesses spatial extension (length, width and depth). If they cannot be collected, and each of them is brought about by the destruction of another, this means that it possesses temporal extension. Both types of extensions are specific to bodies, as was previously explained. [1](#)

Hence, the denial of potential parts in God is in fact the denial of His corporeality, and it implies that He

has neither time nor place. However, the argument for the rejection of potential parts for the essence of the Necessary Existent is that, as was indicated, an existent which possesses potential parts may be divided intellectually into several other existents, and in conclusion, it will be possible for it to be annihilated, while the existence of the Necessary Existent is necessary and indestructible.

Another argument is that the potential parts of every existent are homogeneous with that same existent, just as the parts of a line or a plane or volume are of the same kinds respectively. Now, if it assumed that the Necessary Existent possesses potential parts which are contingent existents, this would imply that the parts are not homogeneous with their whole.

If it is assumed that the supposed parts are also necessary existents, this would imply the possibility of a multiplicity of necessary existents. On the other hand, it would imply that necessary existents which are brought into existence through analysis and division, for the time being, are not existents, that is, that their existences are not necessary, while the existence of the Necessary Existent is necessary and has no possibility for non-being at any time.

The Refutation of Analytic Parts

The ancient metaphysicians commenced discussions under the heading of 'the negation of a whatness for the Necessary Existent,' and proved it by several arguments, and they took advantage of this for various theological problems.

The simplest argument is that the aspect of having a whatness is one of being indifferent to existence and nothingness, and there is no place for such an aspect in the sacred essence of God. In other words, whatness and contingency are twins, and just as contingency has absolutely no place in the divine essence, whatness also has no place in God's sacred Being.

However, on the basis of the principles of transcendent theosophy this issue may be explained in another way which will lead to more important and more brilliant conclusions. It is that whatness is basically abstracted from the limits of finite existents, and as was earlier mentioned, it is a conceptual frame that corresponds to finite existents, and since the existence of God Almighty is free from any sort of limitation, no sort of whatness can be abstracted from Him.

In other words, the intellect can only analyze limited existents into two aspects, whatness and existence. "All contingents are composed of whatness and existence." However, the existence of God Almighty is pure existence and the intellect cannot relate any whatness to it.

In this way, simplicity is proven for Almighty God in a more exact sense, which implies the denial of any kind of composition in the holy presence of God, even composition from intellected analytic parts.

Among the conclusions that follow from the simplicity of the existence of God, the Supreme, in the sense of pureness and infinity, is that no perfection can be denied of God. In other words, all of the attributes of

perfection are established for the essence of the Necessary Existent without being considered additions to the essence, and in conclusion, the unity (tawhid) of the attributes is established.

1. Cf., Lesson Forty-One to Forty-Three.

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